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Rue Saint-Jacques

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Rue Saint-Jacques

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Key Words: Draping, Pleating

While attending the Paris American Academy in Paris, France, last summer, I had the chance to learn from some of the best professors who had once worked side by side with Madame Grès learning and perfecting her techniques. During my time there I studied many different couture techniques which I was then able to use in the completion of a Madame Grès inspired gown.

The purpose of this garment was to gain an understanding and develop skills in the art of couture. Through this process I was able to study the pleating and draping techniques of Madame Grès and then apply them to my final piece. Through my schooling, I created this piece having inspiration from Madame Grès, her pleating techniques, and the culture around me. Each week for a month I studied multiple hand sewing techniques individually and then applied them to my gown. I worked to create a completely hand sewn couture garment that was made to fit my body as if I were the client.



I began by cutting four rectangular pieces of the jersey and hand basting marks in the corners to distinguish between the wrong and right sides. One challenge I faced while creating this garment was the use of cm in France compared to inches. I then made sure I had enough seam allowance at my shoulders before pinning it to the mannequin. Once pinned I took a piece of cotton ribbon and marked the middle, front and back. I then put it over my fabric and folded 5cm deep pleats. I made as many as I could until I needed to form my side seam and leave the part of my fabrics closest to my side seam flat, I did these steps for my right side front and back since these were then to be used as pattern pieces for my left sides. In order for them to be used as pattern pieces I had to hand baste

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an extra long piece of colored thread throughout the pleats catching only the edge so that when I opened up the fabric to transfer markings I would still know where the previous pleats where. In order to transfer markings I first marked all the lines with pins and then ran a long colored piece of thread throughout it as well. I then hand basted each seam, including the shoulder seam, before putting the dress back on the mannequin, only this time inside out. Organza pieces where then inserted into the shoulder seams. I then machine sewed the middle front, back and two side seams together in order to make sure they were sturdy. Once this was complete I put the dress on the form again in order to form and pin each pleat all the way around the dress. Then to hand sew the pleats I stitched each pleat by hand off the mannequin so that only a small point stitch could be seen from the outside. The ribbon is then removed and a waistband is put in on the inside in its place.

Finally, a placket like piece is created and placed in the front with an invisible stitch and metal snaps are sewn on every three inches in the front. The hem is cut and finished by hand and all raw edges are finished with the use of a whipstitch.

Materials: Jersey (Viscose)

Date Completed: July 2012

Measurements: Bust: 30in, Waist: 25 1/4in, Hip: 35 1/2in

